

Session at ICCH9 (Torino, 28 Jun–2 Jul 27)

Politecnico di Torino, Jun 28–Jul 2, 2027

Deadline: Jun 28, 2026

www.constructionhistorygroup.polito.it/icch

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Call for abstracts for the session "TS25 – Building the Industrial Barn: A Construction and Zootechnical History" - 9th International Congress of Construction History.

The barn is a laboratory: an architecture built to host livestock, control its lifecycle, and extract the most from its body (secretions, energy, ultimately flesh and fat). The barn is a building that confines animals and profitably enhances their thermodynamic ability to convert feed into protein. At the same time, the barn is a place where animals and humans meet, and possibly exchange fluids, bacteria, and diseases. The architecture of animal farming is typologically varied, as it reflects the increasing specialization needed for the growth of different species: cowsheds, horse stables, pigsties, chicken coops, sheep pens, dovecotes, etc.

Since the emergence of zootechnics as an independent and scientific discipline during the nineteenth century, the architecture for animal farming has been an experimental field for sanitary and medical practices, as well as a springboard for the industrialization of rural labor. By becoming an industry, the farm was materially and technologically influenced by other industrial typologies. The industrializing farm was a testing ground for the application of building materials (such as lime, cement, tubular steel, concrete, plastics), building layouts, and technological devices (natural and artificial ventilation systems, electric lighting, mechanized conveyors, up to today's robots). The roots of such material and technological experiments, both in Europe and North America (but also extending globally via colonial networks), can be traced back through the many zootechnical handbooks published by institutions like agrarian societies, rural colleges, breeders' associations, veterinary doctors, and construction firms. At the same time, interesting cases derive from nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century model farms sponsored by high class and royal figures, and by many companies throughout the twentieth century. In short, the industrial barn was shaped by an interdisciplinary and transnational group of both prominent and anonymous actors, who strived for an architecture which could combine the goals of animal productivity with the limits imposed by zoonotic diseases.

This panel aims at bringing together case studies that discuss the construction history of the industrial barn, bringing to the fore the interplay between building techniques, hygiene requirements, and labor (of both livestock and humans). We welcome case studies that are grounded in original archival research and that shed new light on unexplored actors and geographies (papers on transnational and colonial exchanges of farming expertise are particularly welcome). We are

also open to papers that explore the rich interconnections among different zootechnical buildings in the rural landscape (e.g. the barn and the silo). The global influence of the zootechnical industry is so impactful that it cannot be ignored. While contributing to feeding the human population, it causes severe environmental damages and poses urgent ethical questions. Furthermore, zootechnical buildings are rarely the focus of architectural and construction historians, as they are usually limited within the boundaries of regional histories and their rural heritage. This panel will be a first step towards a historical and critical analysis of zootechnics as a discipline that heavily relies on construction expertise and on the interaction between architecture and building technologies.

The panel will be part of the research promoted by the ERC project “Animal Farm: An Architectural History of Intensive Animal Farming (1570–1992)”, launched at the Politecnico di Torino in 2026. The ERC project may also sponsor applicants by co-funding their conference fees and/or travel costs (especially in the case of early career scholars or applicants in need of economic support).

The ICCH9 will bring together researchers from different disciplines and continents to exchange recent advances, results, and insights in the vast and expanding field of Construction History. Special topics will be discussed in dedicated Thematic Sessions organized and chaired by leading experts, while the scope and diversity of Construction History will be reflected in the Open Sessions.

Researchers from all fields connected to Construction History are invited to submit abstracts of contributions for ICCH9. Abstracts must be submitted in English and must not exceed 400 words. All abstracts will be reviewed and selected for presentation by at least two members of the ICCH9 Scientific Committee, which includes the world’s most respected researchers in the field. All papers will be published in an edited open-access proceedings volume and will be available, in digital form, at the congress.

Abstracts must be submitted exclusively via the website: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=icch9>

Abstracts received by other means of communication (e-mail, etc.) cannot be considered. When submitting your abstract, please indicate which of the Thematic Sessions or Open Sessions topics would be the most appropriate for your paper.

Abstracts have to be submitted by June 28, 2026 (midnight CET). Delayed submissions cannot be considered. The decision of the scientific committee will be announced by August 20, 2026.

Full papers are due by October 30, 2026. Submissions will undergo a further review by members of the scientific committee. Only contributions that fully meet the scientific and language quality criteria will be accepted. Please note that only papers presented in person at the conference will be included in the proceedings.

More information: www.constructionhistorygroup.polito.it/icch

Reference:

CFP: Session at ICCH9 (Torino, 28 Jun-2 Jul 27). In: ArtHist.net, May 14, 2026 (accessed Jun 9, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52443>>.